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SICUT PATRIBUS

AND

OTHER VERSE

BY

OSCAR FAY ADAMS

"



PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR

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OSCAR FAY ADAMS

THE AUTHOR
TO
HIS DEAR FRIEND
JAMES ELLS

This Edition of *Sicut Patribus* and
Other Verse, printed by Winthrop
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POST-LAUREATE IDYLLS



SICUT PATRIBUS

A Poem read at the annual meeting of Tufts Chapter,
Phi Beta Kappa, June 17, 1902

I.

Not mine, not mine the hand to sweep the strings
With note triumphal, on this hallowed day.
I am no prophet to foretell smooth things,
Or choose a nation's glory for my lay.
The time for pæans is not yet, or past ;
Rather the shuddering call that strikes us dumb,
When, unto consciences' aroused at last,
The mutterings of a grim tomorrow come.
These be no times for lightsome song :
The shadow of a mighty wrong
Darkens the path before,
Clings like a mist behind ;
We crouch, who stood of yore ;
We grope, who now are blind.

Alas for us! the sons of patriot sires,
 Breathing the air of freedom from our birth,
 Who might have kindled in far lands the fires
 Of liberty, transfigurer of earth ;
 Who might have raised a grateful people up
 To drain deep draughts from freedom's brimming
 cup ;
 Who might have shown them the sure way to
 peace—
 Alas for us! who did no deeds like these.

II.

Alas for us! who light the fires of hate
 Instead ; who dash from eager lips the wine
 Of freedom, crying : “ Ours, the island state!
 'Tis we must hold it by the right divine
 Of Saxon peoples, whose benignant sway
 Inferior races may not once gainsay.”
 Ah me! what sounds are these,
 Borne o'er Pacific seas?
 The wail of a people's dirge,
 That swells as the gathering surge,
 Filling our ears with shame,
 Staining our country's name.

How do we brand the sullen Turk who makes
Armenian villages a smoking waste,
A heap of carnage ; or his pleasure takes
In torture by his hapless victims faced ?
No more may we, our Pharisaic hands
Uplifting, call for vengeance on the Turk,
While in far tropic isles our arméd bands
Engage, relentless, in like curséd work.

III.

In shadowy ranks before me seem to rise
The men of Concord and of Bunker Hill :
Brave souls, who wrung from England that fair
prize,
A nation's freedom, that we cherish still.
With questioning, sad eyes,
As in a strange surprise,
They stand
That plain heroic band,
With parted lips, as they who do behold
In deep amaze some undreamed horror wrought,
And pant for action, as in days of old
To Freedom's altar each his offering brought.

Ah, might they speak! these shadowy risen sires,
 Who doubts what words of theirs would shame
 our souls?

The fierce rebukings of our mad desires,
 The stern contempt for our unworthy goals.
 They never learned in diplomatic phrase
 To hide the scheming that plain speech would
 shame.

Their words, straightforward as their clear-eyed
 gaze,
 Revealed their instant purpose, praise or blame.
 But we,

Heirs of a land made free
 By blood and strife of these,
 Have walked in stranger ways:
 Unto new gods our knees
 Have bent, our lips sung praise.

IV.

“*You*, sons of ours!” I seem to hear them say:
 Drunk with the wine of conquest, *you!*
 What sign of kinship can ye show today
 To prove, past cavi, this your lineage true?
 We grasped the sword to battle for the right
 To stand as freemen forth before the world.

'Gainst subject peoples is your armour dight,
 For greed of conquest is your flag unfurled.
You, sons of ours, who turn your swords' keen
 blade

Against the brown man, fighting for his own?
 Intent on hearkening the behest of trade

Your human hearts grow cold as any stone.

You, sons of ours, who fling aside the law

And doom the shuddering Negro to the stake

In wild revenge, or cause the halter draw,

Sans judge and jury, as your choice may take—

You, carry into distant tropic lands

The flag of progress, and the Christian cross—

Alas! your house is founded on the sands

Your pride is baseless, and your glory, loss.

Not from unworthy palms

Will men receive the alms

You think to dole.

The freedom-loving soul

Seeks only that, and that denied, he spurns

Your vaunted progress, and your proffered Christ,

Meets all your wiles with wiles of his, and turns

A scornful foeman, whom you deemed enticed.

False to the lessons that ye learned in youth,

How dare ye pray for victory in your strife?

You, sons of ours, that with no thought of ruth
Would slay the native, pleading for his life!
Ah, no! and yet,
Who are ye, set
In this same land we died to free?
Ye bear our names, and if it be
Our blood is yours, then did we die in vain;
The pillars that we raised you overturn;
Unholy purpose binds you with its chain,
And all we strove for you would fain unlearn.”

V.

They fade from sight, these builders of our State,
And in their stead appear the youthful shades
Of those, our brothers, whom we sent but late
To wage fierce combat in Philippine glades;
To gather glory, where no glory waits;
To strive for honour, where no honour calls;
To bar with bayonets the opening gates
Whereat the Malay, faint for freedom, falls.
“O Motherland!” they cry:
“It had been bliss to die
Fighting to save the State,
But our ignoble fate
Doomed us to die in vain;

Our blood and pain
Spent but for naught ;
Our hands, that might have brought
Healing and peace to a long subject race,
Red with their blood, instead ; the crowning grace
Of conflict, a just cause, denied our souls,
While o'er our heads the tide of battle rolls.
O Motherland! that you should send us then
To die for conquest, who had died for men!"

VI.

These, too, depart, and in a shadowy cloud
A host of swarthy figures 'round me crowd
Using a stranger speech
As from the lips of each
Escapes the bitter cry of men deceived.
"We trusted you," the voices seem to urge.
"We in your faith and purpose true believed,
Till, like a blow from Heaven, fell the scourge,
And in sad truth we learned
Our friends to foes had turned,
And Spanish fetters were reformed anew.
Ye might have had our love, who gain a hate
Undying, might have garnered praises through
The years to come from a new island State,

But hearkening to greed,
 Turned from us in our need,
 And, blindly reckoning on our feebleness,
 Struck down the hand that had been raised to bless.
 How have ye dealt with those who would be free
 As ye yourselves? What lessons have ye taught
 Of gentleness, and high humanity,
 Of Christian purpose and of noble thought?
 Our smiling fields are waste
 By Red War's fiery haste;
 Our smoking villages
 Proclaim the flight of Peace,
 And on the torturer's ear unheeded falls
 His victim's cry. Beside a hundred streams
 The unburied brown man lies, nor frenzied calls
 Of wife nor child shall rouse him from his dreams.

VII.

A nation's honour trembles to its fall
 When, at the call
 Of angry pride
 It swerves aside
 From well-worn paths of truth and right
 And, conscious of its sad mistake,
 Speeds ever on, intent to fight
 'Gainst right itself sooner than make
 Confession: "We have evil wrought,

But, having sinned, will sin no more ;
 We own our course with peril fraught,
 And turn to ways we trod of yore.”
 Alas for us! who close resentful ears
 Against the urgings of that inner voice,
 And council take of our unworthy fears
 That press us onward to an evil choice.
 The Nemesis that follows swift upon
 The man or nation that provokes its wrath.
 Hath followed in our track, nor will begone
 Though flights of angels hovered o'er our path.
 The swift decay
 From day to day
 Of high ideals, purpose great,
 And brave imaginings for the State—
 The lust of empire, pushing to the wall
 The weaker races—greed of trade that pays
 No heed to aught but sordid gain—these all
 To our amaze
 Our shameful new inheritance are made,
 Blinding our eyes to deeds of violence,
 Closing our ears against the plea for aid,
 Cheating our souls with shallowest pretence.
 Alas! that we
 Who flamed with anger at the deeds of Spain

Done in our Western World, should stoop to be
Her copy in the far Pacific main.

Calling a world to witness that her crimes

Demanded judgement swift and sure, we caught
The sword and smote. And lo! the changeful
times

Reveal us to the same tribunal brought.

VIII.

Ill counsel they

Who urge essay

Persistent in a dubious course

Though all the gathering signs, presage
Moral defeat, and cry, perforce,

“ ‘Tis shameful weakness in our age,
Not to press forward what is once begun.”

He is the coward who would seek to shun

The consequence of turning back

Upon his outward track ;

Who fears the foolish word of fools pronounced

Upon him, more than good men's honest scorn.

The moral weakling he who hath renounced

His better self, and soulless walks forelorn,

And as the man, the nation that persists

In ways mistaken, knowing its mistake ;

Almighty purpose halts not nor desists

Till erring peoples full confession make.

IX.

Not all in vain
Ye died, who dauntless laid
 With strife and pain
The keelson of our Ship of State
 Though we have blindly strayed
From out the narrow path of late,
 Somewhere within us there abides
The passion for a righteous cause
 We learned from you. The swelling tides
Of misdirected purpose pause
 Or ever they o'erwhelm us quite ;
 The waning light
 Ye kindled flames anew
 As we review
Our heritage, and looking back
 Upon our erring track,
Make high resolve again to be
 Worthy that ye
Should own us as true sons and heirs,
Mindful the while the alien shares
With us at Freedom's gracious banquet spread,
Nor e'en the humblest turns from thence unfed.

X.

But you, our brothers, whose young lives
Too soon were quenched across the seas —
Are there no balms that ruth contrives?
No words to give your souls release?
Our erring Motherland
Is slow to understand,
But every life ye gave
Shall help at last to save
Her from herself, to bring her to her knees
In penitence, and therefore not for naught,
Ye, wrongly striving, passed. From you she
caught
The first misgivings that disturbed her peace
That was not peace, her poor content
That all her ways were Wisdom-sent.

XI.

Nor yet in vain ye died, our foes, whom we,
But for our blinded eyes, had made our friends:
The freedom that ye strove for yet shall be
The guerdon, and the eternal sky that bends
Above both lands may see
With joy the Filipino's flag unfurled
And a new nation born into the world.

The memory of those who fell
 In combat stern for that high end
 Shall sanctify your State, shall tell
 A never-wearying tale, shall send
 Its inspiration unto those who stay
 Behind to welcome in the longed for day,
 And fill them with such love for their fair land
 They never understand
 That have not freely poured their choicest wine
 Upon the altar of a cause divine.

XII.

O God of Nations! we have sorely sinned.
 Thy wind
 Of destiny we may not stand before.
 Thy open door
 Of pardon close not yet
 Upon a people who
 Repent. O God! forget
 Our sin. Let all we do
 But show our penitence. Renew our mind.
 Point us the way we should remorseful tread,
 That we, remembering with tears, may find
 While we have sinned, indeed, Truth is not dead,
 Though we, for gain,
 Against her turned our arms,
 And would have slain
 Her with our selfish harms!

CATHEDRAL VERSE



THE FRONT OF PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL

He reared the minster portal long ago,
The "Golden Borough's" chiefest architect,
Scooped in its rocky face three caverns deep,
Piled 'gainst their sides aspiring carven reeds,
Banded as those that stand in neighbour fens,
Raised o'er this work of his a soaring mass
Of pediment, and pinnacle, and tower,
And spire—then passed into the darkness whence
He sprang, and no man knoweth of his name.

Within the minster aisles lie abbots old,
Frowning in marble as they frowned in flesh,
And all who will may know them as they were ;
But he that wrought the centuries' delight,
The glorious minster's crowning grace, lives not
In stiffly sculptured effigy like these,
Nor on cathedral fabric-rolls are writ
The letters of his name. What matters it ?

He breathed one song, this singer of the past,
And all the air yet trembles to his tones ;
He wrote his verse across the minster front
Where all the world might see, and not one line
The world has lost through centuries' sun and storm.
What matters that he left his verse unsigned ?
What boots it how he looked to those who saw ?

Ah! Peterborough's poet questionless
Knew well how scant the worth of name beside
Achievement's crowning skill. The little deed
May fitly claim the signature's reward
Scrawled underneath, but not the master's work
Needs blurring with the master's name, and thus
The triple gate of Peterborough gleams
Through all the ages from its maker's times
To these, as fair as only that is fair
Which has no need that men should ask "Who
wrought ? "

AT THE TOMB
OF WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM

Builder and prelate, dust five hundred years,
Who lent the Norman's handiwork such grace
The Norman never knew, that Walkelin's nave
Men call the nave of Wykeham, what dost thou
In some far world beyond our ken? Palm pressed
To palm five centuries have seen thee here
Enchantried, and from scholar lips thy praise
At Winton and at Oxford echoes still.
Dost somewhere rest, as this thy marble rests,
Or art thou, builder-bishop, evermore
Striving in other fields, in nobler toils,
Serenely glad the while as one that sees
From some high place, untouched by time, past
good
Grow ever vaster as the centuries fall?

AT LINCOLN

When I went up the minster tower,
The minster clock rang out the hour ;
The restless organ far below
Sent tides of music to and fro,
That rolled through nave and angel choir,
Whose builder knew what lines inspire,
And filled the lantern space profound
With climbing waves of glorious sound,
As I went up the minster tower
What time the chimes gave forth the hour.

When I stood on the minster tower
The lark above me sent a shower
Of happy notes, that filtered through
The clouds that flecked the sky's soft blue,
And mingled with the nearer tones
Of jackdaw calls and stockdove moans,
While every breeze that round me swirled
Brought some sweet murmur from the world,
As I stood on the minster tower
What time the lark forsook her bower.

When I came down the minster tower,
Again the chimes proclaimed the hour,
 Again the mighty organ rolled
 Its thunders through the arches old,
 While blended with its note so strong
 Soft rose and fell the evensong :
 And all the earth, it seemed to me,
 Was still by music held in fee,
As I came down the minster tower
What time the clock chimed slow the hour.

EVENSONG AT NORWICH CATHEDRAL

Quickly 'midst these arches gray
Dies the short November day ;
Through the nave the shadows march,
Muffling column, pier and arch,
Filling huge triforium
With their forces fast they come ;
Sweeping through the long clerestory,
Blotting from the sight the hoary
Ribbed and sculptured roof at last
Whence the day more slowly past ;
While the great choir windows' glimmer
Grows each moment fainter, dimmer,—
Now the gloom hides everything!

Sudden, then, the tower bells ring,
And along that mighty nave,
Dark before as deepest cave,
Lines of light start forth and burn,
Sharp revealing every turn,
Curve, or line, though far aloof
In the groins of yonder roof,
Carved by chisel mediæval,
Smile of saint or leer of devil.

Under these clear lines of fire
Move the purple-cassocked choir,
As through aisles and arcades long
Rolls the tide of evensong,
And the organ's undertone
Trembles through the walls of stone,
While the anthem note is telling,
"Oh, how amiable Thy dwelling."

Swells and falls the song of praise
In the mellow music maze,
Echoes from each far arcade
Like the songs by seraphs made,
Wanders on from wall to wall,
Fainter seems, then ceases all,
Till the chanter from his seat
Murmurs benedictions sweet.
Then the organ peals once more
While across the footworn floor
Choir and hooded canons go,
Two by two and moving slow,
Till the last white robe is made
Invisible in columned shade,
And a moment after then,
Floats a solemn, sweet "Amen!"

Soon the lines of fire die out,
Darkness folds its arms about
All within these mighty walls.
When the last faint echo falls
Night and silence join their files
In the long cathedral aisles.

IN THE GALILEE AT DURHAM

CONFESSION

We have erred and strayed from Thy ways :
 We have followed too much our desires,
While we hid from Thy heart-searching gaze.
We have erred and strayed from Thy ways,
And have wandered in sin many days,
 Where no breath from Thy presence inspires.
We have erred and strayed from Thy ways :
 We have followed too much our desires.

IN WALTHAM ABBEY

Here is the temple he builded, he, Harold, the
bravest of Saxons.
Somewhere near it he lies, where once rose the
canons' high altar.
Altar and rood and choir walls indeed have long
crumbled to ruin ;
Only the nave abides yet, with its double arcade of
huge columns,
Carven eight centuries since with deep groovings of
spiral and chevron.
Here when the traitorous Tostig, his brother, had
fallen at Stamford,
Hard by Northumbrian Derwent, with Harold
Hardrada, the Norseman,
Came, with a few in his train, the victor, King
Harold, the Saxon.
Afar in the north the foes of his England were
broken and flying ;
Anear in the south the foes of his England were
gathered together.

There in the north had he shivered the might of
fierce Harold Hardrada ;
Now in the south must he scatter the armies of
William the Norman,
He that would make England free, he, Harold, the
great son of Godwin.
So, as he entered the fane that in happier time he
had builded,
Slowly he trod the long nave till he came before
the high altar,
There bowed him down to the pavement, and
tarried prostrate and silent.

Shadows of morning had shortened to midday and
once more had lengthened
Ere he rose up from the stones, that, it may be, had
heard his petitions,
God and they only, for no human ear heard aught
in that silence.
Who may tell what were the thoughts of the king
in those hours of abasement ?

Better than he knew no one the power of the
Norman invader,
Better than he who should know the strength or the
weakness of England?
Was it foretold, as he lay there in humble, silent
entreaty,
What was to hap on the morrow, who was to win
in the conflict?
Was it revealed that the day at Senlac should be
William's, not Harold's,
Or was it left in the veil of the future, dark wrapt
from foreknowledge?
This only is told us: That when the long vigil
was ended and Harold,
Rising, had passed down the nave to the door at
the westward, and turning,
Faced yet again the high altar, the great rood before
it moved slowly,
Leaned itself forward, then bowed as in pity, to
Harold.

So runs the legend of Waltham concerning that
day ere the battle.
Forth from the abbey he went on that evening in
early October,
Mustered his legions together at London and marched
to the southward,
On to the hill of Senlac, where he pitched his camp
on the morrow,
On to the gloom of defeat and of death at the hands
of the Norman,
On to the glory of death for the earldom of Wessex
and England!

This is the shrine of his building: Here his foot-
steps awakened the echoes
(Echoes reverberate still through eight centuries lost
in the darkness)
On that far distant day when he moved 'mid these
arches in anguish of spirit.

IN THE CRYPT AT WINCHESTER

DE PROFUNDIS

Out of the deep I cry to Thee
Who notest e'en the sparrow's fall :
O Lord, be merciful to me!

I may not rise unless set free
From burdens that my soul enthrall :
Out of the deep I cry to Thee.

I strive, yet fail, and seem to be
The sport of fate, while doubts appall :
O Lord, be merciful to me!

Dark is my path ; I may not see
How good is yet the fruit of all :
Out of the deep I cry to Thee.

O let my way with Thine agree ;
(My way, o'erhung as with a pall :)
O Lord, be merciful to me !

Incline Thine ear unto my plea ;
Break not the reed, but hear my call :
Out of the deep I cry to Thee,
O Lord, be merciful to me!

ON A GRAVE
IN CHRISTCHURCH, HANTS

Turning from Shelley's sculptured face aside,
And pacing thoughtfully the silent aisles
Of the grey church that overlooks the smiles
Of the glad Avon hastening its tide
To join the seaward-winding Stour, I spied
Close at my feet a slab among the tiles
That paved the minster, where the sculptor's
files
Had graven only "Died of Grief," beside
The name of her who slept below. Sad Soul!
A century has fled since kindly death
Cut short that life which nothing knew but
grief,
And still your fate stirs pity. Yet the whole
Wide world is full of graves like yours, for breath
Of sorrow kills as oft as frost the leaf.

MISERRIMUS

This is the sole inscription on the stone which covers the remains of the Reverend Thomas Morris, in the north walk of the cloisters at Worcester Cathedral. He was a Minor Canon of Worcester who refused to take the oath of allegiance to William III., and was consequently reduced to great poverty. He died at the age of eighty-eight, and at his request this single word was placed upon his tombstone.

“Most wretched one!” No, not to him belongs
 Misery’s preeminence in this sad world’s sight
 Who suffereth for conscience and the right,
 As he deems right. To him the scourging thongs
 Of adverse fortune and the countless wrongs
 His fellows cast upon him are too light
 Afflictions to endure forever. Spite
 Has never hushed one note of heavenly songs.

But he that gains the plaudits of the crowd
 For deeds unworthy, hears men name his sins
 As virtues, and thereof wax emulous,—
 He only that such shameful honour wins,
 (Not this non-juring priest), should cry aloud
 Past hope, “*Miserrimus! Miserrimus!*”

AT THE GRAVE OF JANE CARLYLE
HADDINGTON ABBEY

Here on your grave as evening falls,
Sunk 'mid the turf and daisies,
Within these roofless abbey walls,
I read a husband's praises,

Of you to whom in life he showed
So little love and kindness,
But on your gravestone overflowed
In vain remorse for blindness.

Not for his pain my eyes are wet,
But for your lot so bitter.
What is to me his weak regret?
His silence had been fitter.

THE BURNING
OF CONRAD'S CHOIR, A. D. 1174

Gervase, a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, speaks:

Ninety long years have I dwelt here, and much
have I seen in that space.

I was the least of the monks when first I came to
this place.

Now is there none in the convent that numbers
more years than I ;

An' God wills I may call them a hundred before
my time comes to die.

I can remember the building of Conrad's great,
glorious choir ;

Conrad, the wonderful mason, and, after Ernulphus,
our prior.

Month after month wrought the workmen, and
year after year rang the blows

Of hammer and trowel on stonework till all that
fair building arose.

When they had end King Henry, and David king
of the Scots,

Came hither with bishops in train each bringing
from holiest spots

Some priceless relic to lay in that mighty cathedral
of ours.

Never since Solomon hallowed the Temple to
Heavenly Powers
Did mortal behold such a sight as I saw on that far
distant day
As twice round the walls with loud chanting passed
the gorgeous and endless array.

Forty years after I watched all one night with the
rest in this place,
While beside us tall candles threw flickers of light
on a murdered man's face.
Becket, our bishop, it was, by those knights so
wickedly slain
Just as the bell rang for vespers and we had
assembled again.
From behind Saint Benedict's altar I saw the foul
murder begun,
And there, with his half-severed arm, fled Grim
when the murder was done.
Never thought I a far woefuller sight than this to
behold
Only a few years after, ere the summer had quite
waxen old.
Feeble indeed is our wisdom and we know not
what shall betide.
While above and beneath and around us the hosts
of Almighty abide.

Midnight had come and the prior had bidden me
watch till the day,
After our habit at Christ Church, where the bones
of the great Dunstan lay.
So through the cloister I went at the hour my
watch should begin
Till I came to where Becket was slain by those
terrible minions of sin.
There, as I stayed for a moment, to say a short
prayer for the dead,
I saw a red glow 'mid the arches, and on through
the transept I sped
And up the long steps to the choir: ah, woe for
the terrible sight!
From the steps to the shrine of Saint Dunstan the
choir was ruddy with light,
For flames had curled round the stalls and stretched
themselves up to the roof,
And, e'en as I gazed, caught the rafters and roared
as the sea up aloof.

They leaped from one beam to another, and the
carven work melted like snow ;
They surged up around the shrine pillars that bent
like a tightly stretched bow ;
And onward they rolled in vast billows ; the place
was a horror of fire :
The holiest spot in all England, our Conrad's
glorious choir.
Anon came the prior and the brothers : the people
streamed in through the nave
And they looked at the fiery tempest, and a
horrible cry they gave
That rang through the great nave arches, and rose
o'er the dull roar of flame,
As they called on the Lord in their madness and
cursed his most reverend name.
Still the surges of fire whirled upward till the choir
roof crashed to the floor,
And the flames mounted up to the heavens while the
people blasphemed yet the more.

They tore out their hair in their frenzy ; they beat
at the walls with their hands,
And they caught at the stones in the pavement as
the wild waves clutch at the sands ;
They dashed their heads 'gainst the pillars till blood
was sprent over the space ;
And they burst into terrible singing, as demons had
stood in their place.

“Now a curse on Saint Wilfred of Ripon, and a
curse on Saint Blasius of Rome!
And curse upon curse light on Dunstan ; the deep
pit of hell be his home.
May Saint Ouen lie with him in torment ; Saint
Swithun be doomed to despair ;
And the rest who are snugly enshrined here be torn
by the fiends of the air.
For they sleep, and the glory of Conrad is past in
a moment of time :
They sleep, and the enemy cometh and despoileth
the altar sublime.

“And a curse upon God in His heaven, who
suffers such evils to be ;
And curses, too, on His Son, who refuseth our
anguish to see ;
And a curse on the Holy Spirit, that to save lifts
never an arm ;
And a thrice bitter curse upon Mary, who will not
defend from such harm
The temple that Conrad hath builded in honour of
Jesus, her Son ;
And curses, too, on the angels ; away with them,
every one !
For the glory of Conrad is passing ; our God is as
stubble or stone ;
Let us turn from His worship forever, and bow us
to Satan alone !”

And now through the open choir roof a wind from
the seaward there drave
That lashed the flames into fury and swept them
forth to the nave ;

And the people fled before them as chaff when
a whirlwind is blown,
Or as leaves in the front of a tempest hurried on
betwixt high cliffs of stone.
And hushed was the voice of blaspheming while
high rose the roar of the flames
Where the people had stood in their madness
reviling the thrice holy names.

When the fearsome night past and the morning
shone down on our convent once more,
“Ichabod,” murmured our prior, “the glory of
Conrad is o’er ;
He smiteth, and we are sore humbled ; He
scourgeth our pride with His fire ;
He sendeth His wrath out amongst us and abaseth
our glorious choir.
O, who can fathom His purpose, or who can read
straightway His plan ?
The Lord’s ways are never as our ways, and
foolish before Him is man !”

In the year 1174, the choir of Canterbury Cathedral was destroyed by fire, and according to Gervase, the monkish chronicler of these events, and himself a witness of what he describes, “The people were astonished that the Almighty should suffer such things, and maddened with excess of grief and perplexity, they tore their hair, and beat the walls and pavement of the church with their hands and heads, blaspheming the Lord and His saints, the patrons of His church.”

MISCELLANEOUS VERSE



A WITHERED ROSE

These brown, curled leaves were once a rose
All fair and fresh, and sweet as fair.
Now summer's past, and winter snows
Have buried Hope slain by Despair !

INEVITABLE

The fairest rose that blooms hides yet a thorn ;
The dearest friend shall one day bring you grief ;
In August twilight is the winter born,
And waving wheat precedes the falling leaf.

BLACK ROCK, NANTASKET

A huge black sea-shape left at turn of tide,
It drags, afar from shore, its low gaunt length.
In dateless æons in lone waters wide
Was this some slimy saurian's league-long strength?

DECEMBER'S WOOING

I.

DECEMBER TO MAY

Though I look old, love,
I'm young and bold, love,
When I see you.

Fain would I ask, love,
From you some task, love,
To prove this true.

That done, I'd take, love,
In payment's sake, love,
This maid I woo.

II.

MAY TO DECEMBER

Would you, indeed, sir?
Pray take good heed, sir,
To what I say.

This my behest, sir:
Cease to protest, sir,
Your love today.

Ne'er will I wed, sir,
Where youth is sped, sir,
So go your way!

REALITY

Of Love the minstrel sang, and drew
An easy finger o'er the strings,
Then laughed and sang of other things,—
Of grass and flowers and azure blue.

Of Love the poet wrote, and soft
And sweet the liquid measures flowed,
Then gave his moments to an ode,
And crooks and shepherds mentioned oft.

One day the singer met with Love,
And mighty music shook his strings,
While dreams and light imaginings
His new-roused spirit soared above.

Love met the poet on his way,
And kindled all his soul to fire,
Filled all his measures with desire,
And left no room for fancies gay.

The minstrel sang to Love one song,
And died for joy, yet lives in this.
The poet, touched by Love's warm kiss,
With echoes fills the ages long.

DEAR HEART, BELIEVE

Dear heart, believe I think of you
When evening grey shuts out the blue ;
 In the slow hours of middle night,
 And when the lances of the light
First thrust the mists of darkness through.

Nought can the days of absence do,
When faith is strong and hearts are true,
 To blur with change affection's might,
 Dear heart, believe.

If sullen death between us drew
The veil that bars from earthly view
 The much loved face, the clearer sight
 Would still discern in death's despite.
Beyond the veil can love pursue,
 Dear heart, believe.

CAMBRIDGE

Read at the Annual Meeting of the Boston Authors Club,
January 30, 1905

Dear city, round whose marshy rim the Charles
Passes his steel-blue sickle in slow glee,
And, circling ever, slips at last through snarls
Of piers and bridges to the expectant sea.

To thee is turned the "soft Venetian side"
Of Boston. On thy myriad roofs the slopes
Of Arlington look down; between, a tide
Scholastic ebbs and flows, sun-smit with hopes.

Needs must they love thee who may call thee home,
Whose centuried past their grateful reverence claims;
Thy sister city of the golden dome
Points to no fairer scroll of noble names.

Here roamed "the Scholar Gypsy" long ago;
Here gently ruled our "New World Philhellene";
Here came the wanderer from the Pays de Vaud;
And here New England's Sibyl passed between

The gates of birth. Here, where the lilacs hedge
The winding road, the Gentle Singer told
The Legend Golden; and the murmuring sedge
Of his loved Charles still with his name makes bold.

Here, where the Elmwood thickets lift their pyres
Of green, a later summons came, and he,
Our best and noblest, whose each word inspires,
Slipped from life's moorings on a shoreless sea.

Ah me! the men that were and are not now.
The seasons come and pass and bear away
One after other, as from autumn bough
Is swept at whiles the fruitage of its May.

O City of the Scholar! Wider spread
Each year thy green elm shades, but ever keep
In quick remembrance these thy children, sped
To some far country through strange fields of sleep.

NABOTH

Great honour hath Boston, the city, won of late in
a glorious fray
With a handful of Portuguese fishers on that island
just down in the bay.
The fishers were poor and defenceless, the city was
wealthy and strong,
Hath it not been ever from old time that the poor to
the spoiler belong ?

It is twice twenty years since their fathers in the lap
of a favouring breeze
Put out from the far Western Islands and hitherward
sailed over seas.
The islands of summer to rearward sank slowly from
sight in the wave,
As they spread out their sails to the sunshine and
swift through the water they drave.
And they came, after many days' sailing, to a sea-
fronting, sand-girted town,
With a fringe of white sand dunes to northward and
southward the fishing smacks brown,
That lies at the end of a sea-daring, sea-cleaving
spear of the land,
And after long tossing on billows it was good in
that fair town to stand.

And some of them said, "We will dwell here, nor
seek elsewhere for a home,"
But the rest were not of this liking, and once again
sped o'er the foam
Till they came to the harbour of Boston, and
arrived there in sight of the town,
They brought their staunch vessel to anchor in the
lee of a yellow cliff's frown.
A long, narrow isle was before them, and on it
they landed that day,
And built them rude huts by the sea beach, where
the women and children might stay.

And the busy years past and they prospered, these
fishers from over the main,
Till the elder men died and were buried, and over
their labour and pain,
But their children remained on Long Island, and
followed a sea-faring life,
As their fathers before them, in peace, with never
the murmurs of strife,
Till Boston, the city, grew jealous, like Ahab, the
the ruler, of old,
When he longed for the vineyard of Naboth, which
he from his gates could behold.
No vineyard was this on Long Island, but a few
scanty acres of beach,

Yet even there did the city her covetous fingers
outreach.
Though the fishermen begged for their homesteads,
the strong city answered them "Nay,"
For she wanted, in spite of her riches, those few
acres just down in the bay.
So she gathered together her servants and sent them
to Long Island strand,
And they tore down the fisher-folk homes and
strewed the wreck over the land,
While the Portuguese women bewailed them, but
their husbands stood sullen aside
And wondered that God in the heavens could the
wrongs of His servants abide.
Thus the work of destruction went onward, while a
cloud of dust covered the place
Where the men from the distant Azores had
nourished a peace-loving race,
Till the grey of the long August twilight came down
on that isle in the sea
And covered the work of the spoilers, and the
morrow was yet to be.
Then the masterful foemen of Boston shame-facedly
hurried away,
While the curses of those they had plundered rang
after them over the bay

As they ring in the ears of Almighty who bringeth
the strongest to shame,
Who heedeth the griefs of the humble and divideth
the praise from the blame.
But His ways are still hid in the future and the city
is great in her pride,
And the men in her fair council chambers the
Portuguese fishers deride ;
And still in the streets of the city the deed of those
foemen they praise,
Who drave from Long Island the fishers on those
sunshiny midsummer days.

Thus honour abundant did Boston achieve in a
glorious fray
With a handful of Portuguese fishers on that island
just down in the bay.
And so long as the church-bells of Boston ring out
from her myriad towers,
So long will the praises be chanted of these valorous
foemen of ours
Who divided in sunder the roof-trees that sheltered
a peace-loving folk,
Who shattered in fragments their hearth-stones and
quenched forever their smoke.

1887

ON TRURO MOORS

O friend of mine, so dear to me,
 Forget not yet those summer hours
On Truro moors beside the sea.

O'er rolling downs we roamed in glee
 To where the tall white lighthouse towers,
O friend of mine, so dear to me.

On those high cliffs I sat with thee,
 When clinging sea-fog spilt slow showers,
On Truro moors beside the sea.

Fair hopes we had for days to be,
 We said high purpose should be ours,
O friend of mine, so dear to me.

In sun or cloud we paced that lea
 Elate with all that friendship dowers,
On Truro moors beside the sea.

Ah! far-off week from care so free
 (Time from its span no charm deflowers,
O friend of mine, so dear to me)
 On Truro moors beside the sea.

AT PARTING

With eyes in which there gleamed a tear,
 And voice whose syllables were broken,
She stood aghast in sudden fear.

With eyes in which there gleamed a tear,
She gazed at him who loved her dear,
 And left the farewell half unspoken,
With eyes in which there gleamed a tear,
 And voice whose syllables were broken.

For soon would seas between them roll,
 And half the world its distance sever.
How should content possess her soul
When seas would soon between them roll?
Then round her waist his strong arm stole—
 “Dear heart,” he said, “my love dies never,
Though seas will soon between us roll
 And half the world its distance sever.”

UT QUID DOMINE

PSALM X.

Why standest Thou from us afar,
O Lord? Why hidest Thy face?
In need and sore trouble we are.
Why standest Thou from us afar,
When the wicked the poor doth debar
From his right, and debase?
Why standest Thou from us afar,
O Lord? Why hidest Thy face?

The wicked hath said in his heart
That his glory shall never be less.
“With defeat I shall never have part,”
The wicked hath said in his heart;
So the poor he maketh to smart,
And seeketh his goods to possess.
The wicked hath said in his heart
That his glory shall never be less.

“For God hath forgotten,” he cries;
“The Lord hath forgotten the poor!”
With his tongue he uttereth lies:
“For God hath forgotten,” he cries.

He lieth in wait in disguise
That his deeds may be secret and sure.
“For God hath forgotten,” he cries ;
“The Lord hath forgotten the poor!”

Most surely, O Lord, hast Thou known ;
For Thou seest all sorrow and wrong ;
The friendless Thou helpst alone.
Most surely, O Lord, hast Thou known
That the wicked so mighty are grown ;
And to Thee we lift up our song.
Most surely, O Lord, hast Thou known ;
For Thou seest all sorrow and wrong.

O Lord, Thou hast heard our desire,—
Incline Thou Thine ear to our prayer :
Let the wicked no longer conspire.
O Lord, Thou hast heard our desire,—
Lift us up from the clay and the mire,
And our hearts in Thy mercy prepare.
O Lord, Thou hast heard our desire,—
Incline Thou Thine ear to our prayer.

O FRIEND ESTRANGED

O friend estranged, whose love, now cold,
Once warmed my heart with bliss untold,
How near we were, now sundered far!
What fate perverse did forge the bar
That holds apart the friends of old ?

Do you forget how o'er us rolled
The tides of feeling uncontrolled,
Before your love knew wound or scar,
O friend estranged ?

When first your hand-clasp loosed its hold,
And dark mistrust, grown over-bold,
Crept in, your faith to blur and mar,
Did not your spirit feel the jar
Preluding friendship's death-knell knolled,
O friend estranged ?

THE ARTIST'S LAST PICTURE

Upon the painter's easel stands
The latest picture from his hands.
The canvas shows a sunset glow
Reflected in the lake below,
While mountains farther from the sight
Have caught the day's departing light,
And autumn's tints upon the leaves
Are paled by these the sunset weaves.

Oh, nevermore that rosy sky
Will darken as the moments fly ;
Or colour fade from off the lake,
Or mount a duller tint will take.
The glories of the lingering day
Are on that canvas fixed for aye!

The hand that laid those colours fair,
The brain that schemed to set them there,
Have no more work, meseems, to do,
For both are still ; the palette, too,
Hangs idly from its peg ; and o'er
The box of pigments on the floor
The spider throws her web. The sun
That glittered while the work was done,
Has set in night for him who made
This canvas fair with light and shade ;

For ere these glowing hues were dry
He turned him from his task to die.

Ah! not in night his day declined ;
Not thus the spirit saith. The mind
That thought, the brain that willed,
Are with diviner cunning skilled,
And somewhere out of earthly sight
The artist is, and morning light
Illumes his canvas : through his soul
The harmonies of heaven roll,
And mortal sunsets to him seem
But as some faintly-outlined dream
Recalled in brightest mid-day gleam.

“IN PEACE AND QUIETNESS”

A silver tide,
The waters glide,
And round the feet of mountains slide,
O'er whose high steep
The moonbeams peep,
And on through winding valleys keep.

'Mid craggy walls,
Where alway calls
The voice of many waterfalls,
A castle stands,
Whence robber bands
Once ravaged all the neighbour lands.

Their fierce alarms,
Their clang of arms,
Rang o'er the peasants' wasted farms ;
And city streets
Heard their hoof beats,
Beheld the keeping of their leets.

Their riot fills
 No more the hills,
And stirs a myriad mortal ills.
 Their day is done,
 Their course long run,
And memory fain their names would shun.

 Along these slopes
 With nature copes
The peasant, scattering seed in hopes.
 The fig and vine
 Their boughs entwine ;
The valleys sing with corn and wine.

 In summer days
 A golden haze
Hides mount and river in its maze ;
 In summer eves
 The moonlight weaves
A shimmering splendour of the leaves,

 Or silver lights,
 On autumn nights,
It scatters where no foe affrights ;
 While softly there
 The call of prayer
Floats forth upon the peaceful air.

IN THE LIBRARY AT ELMWOOD

These are the friends whom he loved : these books
that reveal on their pages
Pencilled marks of approval, as one claps a friend
on the shoulder
Who has uttered a witty or wise thing. These are
the friends he loved best,
And he knew them as one knows a brother. Now
they look down from their places,
At evening and morning and mid-day, and mourn
his untimely departure.
Many a time on their leaves has his white hand
lovingly rested ;
Many a time has he gone to these friends for their
generous counsel ;
Often and often have they and the poet made
merry together.

Now the sweet converse has past, and the glow of
the fire on the hearthstone
Flashes across the dark faces that leaned from the
shelves to speak to him
In accents that he understood whatever the tongue
that was spoken ;
Gleams on the papers that lie on the stand where
he carelessly tossed them ;
Glitters on ceiling and walls but no longer discovers
the presence,
Gracious and courteous ever, that once made the
scholar's apartment
Seem like the throne of a king when he sat there by
such friends surrounded.

HULL

Low leagues of coast dunes bending to the west
Are tremulous with waving beach grass green,
Or all aglare with shifting sands that, seen
At midday, show their arid whiteness best.
At farthest end start up, as if to breast
The ocean's might, low rounded hills that lean
Their turfed slopes to the sun, and in between
These swelling downs a road winds, all unguessed
Till near, and fringed with homely farmsteads like
Some country lane with honest country bloom.
The murmurs of the sea seem faint and far
Though close beside. All summer sounds that strike
The ear bring peace. All winds waft blent
perfume
Of sea and meadow through the village quaint.

WHICH

O which were best, and who would dare to choose
Between the friend who holds you as his life,
Counting all effort useless if his strife
Win from you no fond word—content to lose
All else but you—or him you know no ruse
Of time can part your soul from, and no knife
Of fate dissever, though all tongues were rife
With tales of slander his fair fame to bruise?

O which were best? To give or to receive?
To love, or to be loved? To take away,
Or stand with gifts of love before the gate
Of one beloved? Oh! curious heart, believe
All love wins love, and choice were foolish play
In this. The twain are one, or soon or late.

WHAT CAN DREAR DECEMBER SAY?

What can drear December say
That should make our souls rejoice?
Fields are white and skies are grey;
Winter speaks with sternest voice.
Summer's gone far over seas;
Scent and sweetness all are fled;
Every southward sweeping breeze
Wails a dirge for summer dead.
Hearts are numb with nameless pain,
For the year is near its death:
"Joy once past comes not again,"
To itself the sad soul saith.
This is what December says,
Heard through snows and flying sleet:
"Even in my shortening days
Still abide presagings sweet
Of the pleasant time to be.
In my woods the hazel swells;
Under snows who looks may see
Epigæa's rose tinged bells.
All the blasts in fury reeling
Cannot quench my Christmas light.
Heart, look up! One came with healing
On a dark December night."

HORATIO NELSON POWERS

1826-1890

Death hath no power o'er such as he ;
The fulness of the life to be
Shone round him in the life he spent
Within this mortal prison pent.
Texts might we gather from his looks
Such as men read in holy books,
And in his speech could hear at will
The Master's gracious accents still.

A MEMORY AT CHRISTMASTIDE

Again the snows, the Christmas carols sweet ;
Again the days so full of Christmas cheer.
Ah me! the friend who spoke with me last year,
And warmed my very heart with love's glad heat
Lies now where fall the winter snow and sleet,
And I, who held him past all others dear
And counted every hour without him drear,
No more shall list the coming of his feet.

LOVE IS SO SWEET

Love is so sweet, but he seldom stays long :

(Roses of June are gone ere July.)

Love is so sweet, but brief ia his song :

(Roses of June on the first winds fly.)

Love is so sweet, but he leaves a pain :

(Roses of June have a thorn 'neath them all.)

Love is so sweet, but he comes not again :

(Roses of Juue must wither and fall.)

Love was so sweet, but his day is past :

(Roses lie deep 'neath December snows.)

Love was so sweet, but he fled so fast ;

(Roses are done when the summer-time goes.)

BEFORE THE GATE OF STORMS

Before the gate of storms two dim shapes met :

(*Cold are the winds when December flies ;*)

The one was robed in weeds of sad regret,

But saw the shining of the other's eyes.

Then he who wore the seal of sorrows great :

(*Dark are the nights when December goes ;*)

“ Alas ! who art thou, that with face elate

Peerest so eagerly through whirling snows ? ”

Clear rang the other's answer in his ear :

(*Crisp are the snows when December speeds ;*)

“ I am the spirit of the coming year ;

My name is Hope, and always hope succeeds. ”

Slow turned the sad one from before the gate :

(*Shadows are black when December parts ;*)

“ O eager one, within the future wait

Thy coming, pain and woe and broken hearts.

I am the spirit of the going year ;

(*Sad are the hours when December flies ;*)

My name is Loss, and me all men do fear,

For in my bosom twelve months' anguish lies ! ”

AT BAY

This the end, then, of striving ; this is what comes
of it all ;

Darkness and foes just behind one ; before, an
impassable wall.

What does it matter how staunchly one may have
battled for truth,

When with his weapons all broken he sits by the
grave of his youth ?

What did it profit in past years that one did the best
that one knew,

When in the gloom of the present, virtue herself
seems untrue ?

Why should one fight any longer when nothing
remains but defeat ?

Surely such labour were useless, and idle the stirring
of feet.

Ah ! but the soul that is faithful knows it is well
to have fought ;

Knows it is good to have acted, whatever the doing
has brought.

This is the crown of the conflict, this the reward
of all strife,—

Faith in one's self and one's motives, no matter how
darkened the life.

Flesh may be bruised and defeated, but spirit is
never disgraced ;
Spirit is always triumphant, whatever sharp pain it
it has faced.

Here, at the end of my conflict, I counsel not yet
with despair,
Though to all seeming my struggles are his who but
beateth the air.
Darkness and foes are about me, yet I stand with
my back to the wall,
Facing whatever Fate sends me, and facing Fate
thus I shall fall !

A LAGGARD SPRING

The winter tarried and the spring was late,
And still from wild waste lands to northward blew
The gale that stiffened nightly all the brooks
Which fed the rivers flowing past the cliffs
Of lonely cloud-swept mountains to the sea ;
And all the people wearied of the cold,
And all the fields were crying for the sun.
But when the mid-March weeks were past there
 came
A wind from southern lands that vanquished quite
The hosts of winter. All its snows rushed down
In stormful spates, to spread themselves upon
The level meads that lay beside the streams
That in the summer shrank to silver threads
Or lost themselves amid the green, but now
Were one wide water, for the spring had come!

POST-LAUREATE IDYLLS

(SECOND SERIES)



THE PLEADING OF DAGONET

ARGUMENT

*The King of Spades,
He kiss'd the maids,
Which vex'd the Queen full sore.
The Queen of Spades,
- She beat those maids,
And turn'd them out of door.
The Knave of Spades
Grieved for those jades,
And did for them implore.
The Queen so gent,
She did relent,
And vow'd she'd ne'er strike more.*

The time had come when slowly-dying Rome,
Feeling the death-chill creeping near her heart,
Call'd all the legions home from far-off lands
That haply they might save the life of her
Who once was nam'd the mistress of the world.
So they, home summon'd, swarm'd from over seas,
Climb'd Alps or cross'd the drifting sands that
stretch'd
Between them and the much-lov'd mother land,
And left their hard-won conquests to their fate,
An easy prey to lustful heathen hosts.
And bitter was the lot of Britain's isle,

Deserted by the legions seeking Rome,
Till Arthur came and drave the heathen back
That swept from out the North, and made secure
A realm of peace and reign'd there as its king.

But ere such happy ending had been reach'd,
The land was torn with battle, and the streams
Ran blood, and all the fertile fields were waste,
For none were had to till, and all the isle
Seem'd likelier to be the home of beasts
Than quiet kingdom of a peaceful king.
And once eleven fierce and wolfish kings
'Gainst Arthur join'd their strengths and prest
him sore

And gave his arméd men no rest by night
Or day, and truly, as it seem'd, the light
Of Christ had been extinguish'd in the isle,
Had Arthur sent not out a cry for help
That rang across the straits and echo found
In wave-beat Brittany and and distant Gaul.
King Ban of Benwick—counted bravest knight
In all the world, had not his brother king
And brother in the flesh, Bors, King of Gaul,
Been reckon'd equal in men's sight—first heard
The cry, and sent a messenger to Bors
To bid him arm his hosts and speed with him
To aid the king of Britain in his need.

So these twain, Ban of Benwick, Bors of Gaul,
Past o'er the straits and sprang to Arthur's help,
And all the might of the eleven kings
Was broken, and themselves were slain, and none
Were left who own'd not Arthur for their lord.

Now when the powers of the eleven kings
Were scatter'd, and the noise of battle ceas'd
King Ban of Benwick, with his brother Bors,
Laden with Arthur's many grateful gifts,
Again past over straits each to his realm.
A wifeless palace was the home of Bors,
But Ban was wedded unto Margaret,
A peasant's daughter who her first estate
Had long ere this forgot, and fair was she
As many women are, yet not so fair
But there were those with whom her face compar'd
As canker in the hedge to garden rose,
Or moonlight unto dazzling ray of sun ;
And this she knew, and rag'd for jealousy
Within when women fairer than herself
Caught even a passing glance from Ban, her lord.

Now when King Ban return'd from Britain's isle,
His dark face darker yet from sun and wind
Than when he left his realm at Arthur's need,
It chanc'd that in the tale of those who serv'd

Within the palace were two lately come,
Sisters in blood, in age the same, and fair
To look upon as sunlight on gold waves
Of crinkling wheat. Not yet Queen Margaret
Was 'ware that they were of her retinue,
And therefore was it that Ban saw them first.
The time was summer, and a morn of June
Made music in the veins, the scent of flowers
Past down the breeze ; the birds for very joy
Stopt in their songs to circle in mid air,
Began once more and once more broke the strain
For gladness' sake, so full their happy hearts,
While joy and summer reign'd o'er all the world.
It was the morning of a royal hunt,
And Ban the King, array'd as for the chase,
Was passing hastily to palace hall,
To join his knights and squires who stay'd him there,
When sudden music checkt his kingly haste,
And leaning from a window that o'erlookt
The palace court, he saw the sisters twain
At work and singing, like the birds, for joy.
No man but might not at that sight have felt
His heart beat quicker, were he old or young ;
And all forgetting those his waiting knights,
Ban, being human, stay'd to gaze and list.
It was a simple song they sang, of joy
And dole, and ever as one sister paus'd,

The other caught the music's flying thread
And answer'd her, and these the words they sang :—

“ In life and love, if love in life be ours,
Smiling and weeping ne'er were equal powers ;
Yet smiles thro' tears are sweetest smiles of all.

“ It is the little tear that smiles confute,
That soon or late makes lovers' voices mute,
Yet ever gathering surely saddens all.

“ It is the little tear no smiles refute,
Or fleeting smiles of joy all destitute,
That in the heart's life surely saddens all.

“ Love is not worth your weeping : let it go.
Ah, is it ? Tell me, dearest, is it so ?
Dear love is richest when 'tis all in all.”

Sweet were the voices of the sisters fair,
And he who listen'd might not say which voice
Had most of music in it, more than might
One hark'ning to two nightingales that sing
Out of their full hearts in a moonlit night,
All blossom-scented, of the waning May.
So, with the music ringing in his ears,
King Ban past down the stairway to the court ;
But ere he came within the sisters' sight,
One of the twain had taken up the song

Again, and intermingling with the words,
And like a buttress to some lofty wall,
There ran along beside the singer's notes
Her sister's murmurous monotonous of song,

“ My life, once mine, now thine, is surelier mine,
For love, if love be thine, such love were mine,
And death, if death be thine, that death were mine,
Dear love is richest when 'tis all in all.”

The song was ended and the maids arose,
And rising turn'd, and turning saw the King.
Then on the cheek of either flusht the white
To red that slowly pal'd again to white,
And flee they might not, rooted there by fear.
Then he, who saw their fear and sought to calm,
Said gently :—

“ Maids, I pray you, be of cheer,
Such songs as yours are sweet unto mine ears,
And therefore make I payment in such wise
As best beseems a king when maids are fair.”
So saying, Ban of Benwick stoopt and kiss'd
The rounded cheeks that seem'd for kisses made,
So like the peach-bloom in their tenderness,
Then lightly turn'd away to join his knights,
His lips still playing with the song's refrain,
“ Dear love is richest when 'tis all in all.”

Scarce had the echo of his footsteps died,
And still the wonder linger'd in the eyes
Of these King Ban had kiss'd, when Margaret,
'The Queen, swept down upon the sisters twain ;
For she from out her bower had seen the King
Salute the maids, and like an angry sea
Her rising tide of temper swell'd and surg'd,
To break in fury on the heads of these.
No word spake Margaret, but with a hand
Made hard by anger smote the maids on arm
And shoulder, and full harshly drave them forth
From palace doors, and all in dole they went.

Now in the palace of King Ban was there
A bitter-tongued yet not unkindly dwarf,
Dark-haired and swart of hue, one Dagonet,
Who oft at royal banquets flasht his wit
Like nimble lightnings thro' the heavy clouds
Of dullness that opprest the wine-soakt brains
And chase-worn limbs of stalwart squires and knights,
And he returning from some trifling quest
Beheld the weeping damsels driven forth,
And in a moment's space had guess'd the cause,
While all his heart was mov'd and pitiful.
But these on whom the anger of the Queen
Had fallen heavily beheld him not
Thro' mists of tears till he full kindly spoke

And question'd of their grief, and so drew forth
 In fragments, marr'd with many sobs and tears,
 Their woful tale. This heard, Sir Dagonet,
 Eying them tenderly as mothers eye
 A child heart-broken for some pleasure lost,
 Shook merrily his cap and bells, and made
 Some jest that brought the laughter to their lips,
 And gave thereafter counsel they should bide
 Nigh to the palace till the queen had ruth.
 Then Dagonet made haste and sought and found
 The Queen, and shaking gleefully his bells
 Broke into sudden laughter. Then the Queen :
 "Why laugh you now, Sir Fool?"

And quickly came
 The answer back, "I laugh, good mistress fool,
 To think a queen should be a woman too."
 Then Margaret, starting quick aside as one
 Who finds a stinging insect on his arm
 And would be freed from it, said scornfully,
 "Why call me 'fool'? I am no kin of thine."
 "Thou art my sister fool," quoth Dagonet,
 "For Queens are gracious unto all that live,
 But baser women know no note but hate
 To sound in presence of their waiting maids
 Who win a fleeting favour from their lord.
 And therefore do I call thee sister fool,
 And therefore is it that I laugh so loud."

When Dagonet had ceas'd, a silence came
Upon the jester and the jealous Queen,
And either fear'd to speak : the one for shame
That she, a Queen, had so her state forgot
And beaten cruelly two harmless maids
For no fault greater than a simple song,
The other doubtful if his words were wise.
But ere the shadow of the dial mov'd
A hair's-breadth onward toward the close of day,
The dwarf found voice again and begg'd the Queen
To pity those her wrath had driven forth ;
And mov'd by pleadings of the sharp tongued dwarf,
Or by repentant working of her soul,
The Queen melted to pity and the maids
Forgave, and in the rush of feeling vow'd
Her hand should ne'er strike more. Thus Dagonet
O'ercame the wrath of Margaret and saw
The maids restor'd, and in the next year went
As sign of friendly bonds between the kings
To dwell at Arthur's court in Camelot.

THE VISION OF SIR LIONEL

ARGUMENT

*“ There were three sisters in a hall,
 There came a knight among them them all;
 ‘ Good-morrow, aunt,’ to the one,
 ‘ Good-morrow, aunt,’ to the other,
 ‘ Good-morrow, gentlewoman,’ to the third.
 ‘ If you were my aunt
 As the other two be,
 I would say good-morrow
 Then, aunts all three.’ ”*

Sir Launcelot had fled the sight of men,
 And past in dolour to a mournful wood
 Where seldom rang the voice of knights from chase
 Returning, but instead the dismal cry
 Of owl in deepest shadows hid, or beast
 That prey'd upon his brother beast, like man
 On man, and there, a hermit, lived the space
 Of three long years, and there, a hermit, died.
 Now at this time Sir Ector and Sir Bors,
 With others of the broken Table Round,
 Coming to crave a blessing at his hands,
 Found when they gain'd the cave beneath the rocks
 That fring'd the gloomy base of a low hill,
 That he, the holy man they sought, had died
 An hour before, and like a summer storm
 Their grief, and like a torrent flow'd their tears.

Then he, Sir Ector, standing at the feet
Of Launcelot, and lifting up a voice
That shook with anguish, cried aloud, “Thou wert,
Sir Launcelot, head of all the Christian knights !”
And hiding in his scarf a face all marr’d
With weeping, wept again.

There came a hush

Upon them, broken not until Sir Bors
DeGanis, nephew of the dead, cried out :—
“Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, and I dare
To say that thou wert never matcht of none
Among all earthly knighters, and that thou wert
The courtliest knight that ever bare a shield,
And to thy lover truest friend of all
That ever rode an horse, and that thou wert
The truest lover of a sinful man
That ever woman loved, and tenderest man
Wert thou that ever struck with sword, and thou
The goodliest person among press of knights,
And thou the gentlest and the meekest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And to thy mortal foe the sternest knight
That ever put spear in the rest.”

Then rose

A sharp and bitter cry from those who stood

Beside, and stooping down they rais'd the dead
And reverently bare him forth, the flower
Of knighthood, dead before his time.

And one,
His brother Lionel, a knight who seem'd
In the mid-strength and flourish of his youth,
Walk'd last of all with downdropt eyes until
They reach'd the castle of the Joyous Guard,
There he abode till two days after mass
Was sung above Sir Launcelot, and the sound
Of rolling music surg'd along the aisles
Of the small chapel at the Joyous Guard,
And died in mournful murmurs like the wind
In clefts and hollows of some crag above
A heaving stormful sea. But when the knights,
Sir Ector and Sir Bors and all the rest,
Had gone their ways and left Sir Launcelot tomb'd
At altar-foot, the young Sir Lionel
Departed by another way from these,
And past into a wide waste land that lay
On both sides of a sullen stream that swept
Round many a loop of fenland to the sea.
Here in a shatter'd castle of his own
That stood half-islanded by the dark stream,
He past a lonely autumn-tide, nor knew
Nor car'd what hapt amid the world of men ;
For ever was he thinking of the dead

Sir Launcelot, and saying to himself,
“ Would I had died if so be he had liv'd :
Full gladiy had I given my life for his.”
And had his brother knights beheld him then,
They might have deem'd the death he crav'd was
near ;

For like to one whose days have shrunk to hours
He sat in hall unheeding, while the wind
Tore at the casement and was loud without.

So ran the autumn to its end. Each night
The little marshy pools were film'd with ice,
Rime whiten'd the tall reeds that grew beside,
And winter came, and still Sir Lionel
Abode in gloom ; but on a day in spring
Nigh to Our Lady's feast, a sudden glow
O'erspread the land and brake from out the earth
In flame of crocus and of violet.

And on that day Sir Lionel awoke,
And on that day bethought him of the world,
And felt such stirrings of his youthful blood
As if the chase or tourney beckoned him.
Fill'd with the rush of old impetuous
Desires, Sir Lionel was moved to leap
At once to horse and lightly ride away,
But limbs disus'd from action held him fast,
At which he chaf'd and murmur'd but endur'd

Till all his wonted strength return'd and he
Look'd like a copy of that Launcelot
Who in his younger days flasht thro' the lists
And charg'd, in shock of tourney, past the eyes
Of ladies and of kings at Camelot.

The Easter-tide was past when on a morn
In green mid-April, young Sir Lionel,
To southward turning, rode from out that wild
Waste country to a westward-gazing land
That breath'd of coming summer. On the branch
O'erhead the bud had swell'd to leaf, in hue
Pale emerald shot with threads of gold. The birds
Made riotous music in mid-air, and all
The turf burn'd with the daffodil's sharp flame.
Upon the brow of a low hill that cleft
The plain a half-league distant, rose the walls
Of a great castle from whose highest tower
There flutter'd a white ensign cross'd with bars
Of gold, that now and ever caught the sun
And flasht against the blue of sky beyond.
This when he saw, the knight spake to his squire,
A man in years much past his own, "I pray
You stay till I return," and he made speech
In answer, "Yea, my lord." Thereat the knight
Put spurs to horse and rode to castle gate,
That stood wide open and no man was near.

Above the keystone one long since had carv'd,
With intricate device of blazoning,
A shield and legend on a streaming scroll,
But all were dim with years, and none might tell
The sculptor's meaning save that on the scroll
"Amor" yet linger'd, as if one should say
That love outlasted pride of place and name.

Much pond'ring on this thing, Sir Lionel
Rode slowly o'er the drawbridge 'neath the gate
And past within the courtyard. Nothing stirr'd
To meet his coming, tho' his horse's hoofs
Sent all the echoes flying back from wall
To wall, and for a space Sir Lionel
Sat silent on his horse and gaz'd upon
The empty courtyard. On three sides rose up
A high grey wall, doorless and windowless,
But on the fourth an archway pierc'd the stone,
In which a door swung lightly with each puff
Of wind. This seeing, Lionel was mov'd
To pass beyond. Dismounting from his horse,
He lightly overran the steep stone steps,
And pushing with one hand the oaken door,
Past in. Thereat the door clang'd to with sound
Like thunder, nor would ope again. In awe,
Yet nowise daunted, Lionel enter'd now
A hall hung round with 'broideries that mov'd

In the light breeze that thro' the doorway past
With him, and at the farther end there sat
An ancient maiden clad in faded cloth
Of yellow samite. Faded were the eyes
That lookt on him, and faded too the hue
'That once had been sweet colour in the cheeks,
And he, beholding, deem'd her more than twice
His years, and, for she spake no word, bow'd low,
And said with reverence as became a knight
In presence of a dame of rank and years
Like hers, "Good-morrow, aunt." At this a smile,
As wintry watery as the gleam that strikes
Athwart a barren land at close of some
November afternoon, lit up a while
The sombre visage that was turn'd to him,
And ere it past she pointed with a hand
To which, unaccompanied, a jewel clung;
And following with his eyes the hand, he saw
An arch behind her, wherethro' Lionel past
In silence, reverencing her mood, and came
Into a hall ten paces longer than
That other hung with 'broideries, but this
With silken hangings, wonders of the loom.
Upon a dais midway of the space,
Beneath a canopy of crimson silk,
Sat one who seem'd a sister unto her,
The ancient maiden of the yellow robe,

But yet twin lustrums younger, for her eyes
Not wholly fail'd their charm, and on her gown
Of samite crimson folded hands lay yet
Unshrunk. Unto her Sir Lionel
With utmost grace of courtesy stoopt low
Until the plume upon his helmet swept
The floor, and with a voice that seem'd all made
Of courtesy, "I pray you, gentle aunt,
Good-morrow !"

At the words she rose from out
Her chair beneath the crimson canopy,
And lifting a white arm, wherefrom the folds
Of samite crimson slipt in gleaming lines,
With slender finger pointed to a door
Half hid in a shadow, smiling as the sun
Of middle summer smiles across a field
Of rip'ning wheat. In silence Lionel
Obey'd the motion of the finger point,
Push'd ope the door which clos'd behind with sound
That jarr'd the nerves of silence, leaving him
Alone within a corridor that led,
After long windings, to a lofty hall
Lighted by three vast windows in which flam'd
The story of the great Pendragonship
In saffron, gules, and azure. On the walls
Were dinted shields a many. From the roof

Droop't faded banners of some mighty king.
All this Sir Lionel saw not, or saw
As one whose heart is elsewhere sees the shapes
Of men and things about him, but of them
Thinks naught ; for now his eyes were fixt on one
Who mov'd to meet him in a samite robe
Of palest azure, over which a vine
Wrought all of pearls, as thickly sown as turt
With trembling sparkles after April showers,
At random wander'd from the throat to hem.
Beholding stood Sir Lionel, like one
Who after many years of darkness sees
For the first time. Ne'er had he known a maid
So beautiful, for on her cheek there lay
The rose, and on her brow the lily. Hair
Like ripples of pale sunshine made a light
About her like a glory, and her eyes
Seem'd like twin stars.

Silent he stood such space
As one might count an hundred, then upon
One knee in reverence bending, spake aloud :—
“ Good-morrow, maiden —aunt I may not say ;
Sister I dare not—yet were you like these,
I might good-morrow bid you, aunts all three.
This can I not ; but if you be of earth,
As sure I almost deem that one so fair

Was not of earthly mother born, I fain
Would be your eager, faithful knight to serve
You in such wise as you may deem me fit. ”
Thereat the maid, extending a white hand,
Sign'd him to rise ; when he, that moment seiz'd
With rapture of wild love, caught at the hand
And kiss'd it twice or thrice, but ere his lips
Had left it came a darkness over him,
And in the midst of that great darkness was
A voice that sang, and sadly sweet the words.
And when the song had end the darkness past,
And he upon his horse once more, beside
His squire, was gazing on that land that slop'd
To westward ; but the castle no man saw
Thenceforward, and Sir Lionel went his way.

THE PLEASAUNCE OF MAID MARIAN

ARGUMENT

*“ Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
Silver bells and cockle shells
And fair maids all in a row.”*

Isolt the White, the daughter of a king,
Hoel of Brittany, the same who wed
Sir Tristram of the Woods, who lov'd her not,
Within a shadowy hall sat by herself,
Upon an autumn midnight drencht with rain
And loud with shrieking of the gale, and mus'd
How her white hands had been too weak to hold
Her lord, Sir Tristram, who had sworn to love
But her, then lightly broken, for the man
Was light, his promis'd word. He first had call'd
Her by that name, Isolt of the White Hands,
When those white hands had heal'd him of his hurt
Got in some tourney held in Brittany,
And she had lov'd him for the name, and thought,
“ Full surely is he mine as I am his ; ”
And this had lasted but the waxing old
Of the same moon that crescive saw them wed.
Then he had left her taking slight farewell,
And over seas had come no word from him
Of bale or comfort, and a year was past.

Now as she mus'd on love, and musing felt
Aweary of her life because no love
Was had for her, the tempest-driven rain
Beat at the casement, and small puffs of wind
Flutter'd the flame that burnt upon the hearth,
And stirr'd the many-coloured tapestries
That lin'd the wall ; and once a fiercer gust,
It seem'd, drave ope the door, and with the wind
And rain there came one trailing dripping weeds
Of samite after. Then Isolt thereat
Rais'd eyes amidst with tears, and thro' these saw
Her cousin, sharp of tongue, sharper of face,
Of all men call'd Maid Marian the curst,
And gave a doubtful welcome. Thereupon
The sharp-fac'd damsel, clanging to the door,
Laught shrilly, crying out the while :

“ Your guest,
Good cousin, is not to your mind, meseems.”
Thereat Isolt, as stung to courtsey
Perforce, would fain have call'd for lights, and food
And all things needful, had not she, the maid,
Shook off in haste constraining hands and cried :
“ I care not for your simple kindnesses,
Cousin Isolt ;” then louder, “ I have news
Of him you call your Tristram, so much yours
Indeed as any knight may be the prize

Of one among a score of maidens whom
He loves and leaves.”

By this, Isolt the White,
Trembling to hear what she for long had fear'd
To hear, had murmur'd, “ False, my cousin, false,”
But that Maid Miriam shrill'd it once again :
“ Ay ! yours and hers, and any woman's else
On whom his fancy lights,” and crying out
On all false lovers, fled into the dark
That clos'd about her, and Isolt was left
To such small comfort as her prayers might yield.

But when the morrow brake upon a world
Washt clean with tempest, light'd by a sun
That drave the mists before in streaming lines
Of golden vapour, she, the white Isolt,
Out of a tender heart was fain to doubt
The word Maid Marian brought, had not the maid
Stood once again before her crying, “ Come !
Sad cousin, and behold your lord.”

So they,
The twain, took ship, past over seas, and came
To where Tintagel with its crown of towers,
Defies with frowning might of splinter'd crag
The stormful tossing seas of Lyonesse.
There, favour'd by the tangl'd arms of trees
That stretcht deep shadows on the landward side

Of the huge castle, went they by a path
That led with many windings to the tower
Of Queen Isolt of Britain, she men call'd
The Fair. Within her bower she lay asleep
Upon an azure-broider'd silken couch,
And half her robe had slipt aside and show'd
A silver skin glossy as satin, fair
As none was fair before in all that land.

At her Maid Marian pointed hissing, "See!
The false queen whom false Tristram loves."

Then she,

Isolt of the White Hands beholding Queen
Isolt the Fair, belov'd of Tristram, knew
That never would he leave that woman there,
That woman in the high-tide of her youth,
That woman with the glory in her hair,
For her, his faded wife of Brittany,
For her, his pale Isolt of the White Hands,
And bitter was this knowledge unto her,
And bitter, too, the cry within her heart
At thought of it.

Now, as they drew behind
The silken hangings of the room, the queen
Awoke, a step came up the circling stair,

And Tristram enter'd, whom all women lov'd.
On him the twain gaz'd through the narrow rents
That time had worn within the hangings' folds
And saw him stoop to greet the queen with kiss
Such as he never yet had laid upon
The lips of her of Brittany, and heard
Those false ones utter their adult'rous love
Till gloom had fallen, and King Mark, whom none
Remember'd, softly stole into the bower
And from behind false Tristram clove his skull
From crown to nape. So died the sinful knight
Belov'd of women, slain by him he wrong'd.
But she, Isolt the Fair, beholding him
She lov'd dead at her feet, and him she loath'd
Holding the sword, rais'd such a storm as husht
The outcry of those twain in hiding there,
And swiftly moving to the casement's edge,
And shrieking, "Him I follow whom I love,"
Leapt into that white surge which foam'd below,
And past to judgement as the sinful pass.

Then came the white Isolt with Marian
Forth from her place, and stood beside the dead
Sir Tristram, crying, "He is mine, none else
May claim him dead, for he was mine, not hers ;"
Whereat the king star'd full upon her. Face
And voice alike he knew not, but some thought

That she too was by Tristram wrong'd, mov'd him
To growl in churlish answer,

“ Woman, take
The man you claim, if you will have him dead
Who living little lov'd you, as I deem, ”
Then turn'd and past adown the stair, but sent
No long time after two stout churls to bear
Dead Tristram forth where these two women will'd.

So white Isolt bore home her murder'd lord
Across the sea to Brittany, and there
Entomb'd him piously like some dead saint,
And made a pleasaunce all about where vine
And flower grew thickly, and would walk therein
At morning, noon, and even, silently,
Till three slow twelvemonths past, when there
was dole

In Brittany. So hers they made the tomb
She built for sinful Tristram of the Woods,
And after that long sorrow follow'd peace.

But one whom Tristram lov'd in earlier times,
Maid Marian, when she was fair as she
That wedded Mark, came when Isolt was dead
And pac'd the pleasaunce silently at morn
And noon and even, sowing seeds of some

Strange plant from far-off lands, that bloom'd when
next

The summer came, in fair white silver bells
Of fragrance such as no man in that land
Had knowledge of, and by the tomb of him
All women lov'd she laid the fiery-edg'd
And many-wrinkl'd shells that hold within
Themselves the voices of the sea. And when
The autumn tempests came upon that shore,
Driven from streaming seas, she flitted through
Her wind-torn, faded, dripping pleasaunce like
Some wan leaf flying before a gale. And high
At such times shrill'd her voice in broken song,
That seem'd the harsh note of some bird at sea.

“False life ! false love ! Oh, why was I deceiv'd ?
False heart ! false love, that I, poor maid, believ'd !
False life ! false love, that me of hope bereav'd !
False heart, false love !

False lips ! false tongue that spake false vows to me !
False face ! false eyes, whence truth did turn and flee !
False hand ! false heart that brake sweet love's decree !
False life ! false love !”

But when the spring was nigh there came to her
A little comfort from the budding leaf,
As still she pac'd the pleasaunce sowing seeds

Of that strange plant, and year by year there
bloom'd
Within it such a wilderness of branch
And flower and wandering vine as none had seen
The like. Now fifty tides of Martinmas
Were past and over when there came a gale
Fiercer than any on that wind-swept coast,
And in the night above the storm some heard
The song that ancient Marian sang at whiles
Of false love and false life, and hearing shook
With fear of some dread thing.

But those who stirr'd

Upon the morrow earliest beheld
Within the pleasaunce, on the tomb of him
All women lov'd, the dead maid Marian.
About her brows was wound a faded scarf
That dead Sir Tristram wore as knight of hers
Full sixty dusty summers back at some
Forgotten tourney held in Brittany,
And in her hand was claspt a golden chain
That he had given her, and some there were
Who held that death had made her fair again,
Working a miracle for very ruth.
So past her soul to judgement and its rest.
But when three days were past there stood ten
maids

Arow within the pleasaunce strewing blooms
Of latest autumn on the tomb disturb'd
Once more to hold the dust of Marian.

Full quickly glide the years, and none of all
Who knew that land in those dim days are left,
Yet still the pleasaunce shows an isle of green
Midmost of a wide, open, herbless space,
A desolate, waste country no man tills.

GAWAIN AND MARJORIE

ARGUMENT

*“ See, saw, Margery Darw :
Sold her bed and lay on straw.”*

The first born son of Lot and Bellicent,
Gawain, in far-off days of striplinghood,—
Before men call'd him “ false ” or “ light of love,”
And yet the same, for as the boy, the man,—
Half-aimless wandering upon a day
In sweet mid-summer of the Orcades,
Slack-footed under heat and thirst, had come
To a lone fountain in the woods, and bode,
List'ning the tinkling fall of waters cool
And watching the swift arrow-flight of birds.
Tall as a man was Gawain, yet in sooth
The prince was but a lad in years, and all
The curves of his lithe body spoke the boy ;
But let a twelvemonth pass and these would pass.
So stood the time with restless Gawain, who
By fits and starts chaf'd at the island ways,
And gladly would have left the court of Lot
For lands to southward, but that Bellicent
Had pray'd him “ Stay a little,” and again,
“ O stay ! ”

Now, as it hapt, to quiet lull'd
 By fall of waters and by stir of leaves,,
 He past the gates of sleep before he knew,
 And woke to find the shadows trebl'd, while
 A face was looking into his with eyes
 Darker than water in a sunless pool :
 A maid scarce two years younger than himself.
 A gown clung round her, leaving feet and arms
 Bare to the summer's sun, and down her back
 There roll'd the rippling blackness of her hair
 'That sparkl'd like the feathers of the daw.

All this young Gawain saw, half won from sleep,
 And then his marvel had found tongue, but she,
 The maid, a little drawing to one side,
 Took up a lute, and twanging all the strings
 A moment's space, sent out her voice in song
 That maz'd the hearer, who had never known
 There might be aught so sweet this side of heaven.

“ Wind, sun, and rain! and sweet the murmurs be
 Of rill and runlet tinkling to the sea :
 Yet not so sweet as sweet Love's voice to me.

“ Rain, wind, and sun! and dear the wood paths
 are,
 And dear the glimmering of the evening star,
 But not so dear as Love's step heard from far.

“Sun, rain, and wind! and fair all blossoms shine;
Fairer are moonbeams thro’ the quivering vine:
Fairer are Love’s eyes looking into mine.

“Fair, sweet, and dear! and light of heart am I!
Dear, fair and sweet! I cannot choose but cry.
Sweet, fair, and dear! Oh, love me, or I die!”

So ran the words, and when the lute had twang’d
Itself to silence, and the song had end,

The maid had turn’d to pass adown the wood
Without a word in parting. Gawain then—

“Fair, sweet, and dear, so seems thy song to me:
What may they call thee, singer?”

“Marjorie,”

The maid gave answer. Then the prince:

“Thou art

No maid of Orkney, with such eyes and hair.”

To which the other:

“No, but since my life

Was pluckt from welter of down-streaming seas

In some wild storm, so they that sav’d me say,

None other home than Orkney have I known.”

Then by degrees in question and reply,

Did Gawain learn the maiden’s history,

Simple enough and like the maid herself:

For after that chance rescue from the sea,

The rough shore folk, kind after their rough kind,
Had made her welcome unto all they had,
And she, content, had dwelt with them till now.
And once a damsel from King Arthur's court
Had taught her songs; she knew not what they
meant,

But lov'd to sing them to the damsel's lute.
She ceased and turn'd on Gawain a full face,
And crying, "An it please you, sir, farewell,"
Was gone as lightly as the thistle-down
Is blown along upon a summer breeze.
Then Gawain, rising, strode back slow to court,
Musing the while upon the maid whose hair
Outmatch'd the daw's for blackness, and whose eyes
Gleam'd like the water in a sunless pool,
And on the morrow sought the forest fount,
And on the morrow after, and again
Until a week was past, yet never saw
Her whom he would, and day by day grew sick
At heart, till all the court had talk of it.
The queen alone, out of her mother wit
At last made happy hazard of the cause,
And drew from him the story of his love;
And, for she hoped this love might keep the prince
At Orkney ever, set herself to find
The maid, and finding, brought her to the court
To serve as maid of honour till the time

Were ripe for her and Gawain to be wed.
Then, thinking, "All is well for them and me,"
Bided content.

Months sped till twelve wore past,
And still Maid Marjorie bode at the court ;
And Gawain likewise bode, till through his blood
Ran sudden promptings like to drive him hence
Ere long, forgetful of Maid Marjorie
Or Bellicent. Now, as it hapt, there came
Rumours of Arthur to the Orkney court,
And how he beat the heathen down, and how
He fain would build a kingdom in the south
And rear a throne and reign for love of Christ,
And how all brave knights crav'd to serve with him.
This Gawain heard, and, fir'd with knightly zeal,
Past in an hour from boy to man, and took
His armour from the hall, and girt his sword
Upon his thigh, mounted his horse and rode
Away to Arthur in the far southwest,
With scarce a word of parting.

Then the maid,
Who until Gawain went knew not her heart,
Felt that her heart was reft from her, and droopt
Like some dark lily in an August noon ;
And all the court were ware and pitied her,

Save one, who fain had drawn Prince Gawain's
love
To her, and failing, hated all men sore,
But most the maid in favour at the court.

Slow wan'd the months, and scant the tidings brought
Of Gawain till a year had past, and then
A rumour blown about the court proclaim'd
The prince was yet with Arthur, and was made
One of the Table Round, and now was fam'd
As much for conquest in the court of Love
As service in the field or tournament.
Many a noble maid, so blew about
The word, had caught the young knight's fancy,
caught,
But failed to hold, save for a week or month,
And he had gone his way and left the maid
To grieve, and all men call'd him "light of love,"
"False Gawain," too, but naught did Gawain care.
Now when the accusing whisper reach'd the queen,
She laid command no tongue should tell the tale
To Marjorie; but one, the vengeful maid
Past o'er by Gawain, brought the flying word
To Marjorie, and, fierce with spite, told all.

This when the damsel Gawain first had lov'd
Heard but still clung to hope, she straightway came

To Bellicent beseeching that the queen
Would grant her escort of some faithful squire,
'That she might go herself to Arthur's court
Of Camelot ; and pitying Bellicent,
Making no question, knowing well the cause,
Granted the boon, but swell'd it till the maid
Was 'compani'd befitting one of rank.

Then followed weary days, for first there came
The passage over seas, and journey rough
By ways of peril next, until they drew
Nigh unto Arthur's city of the West,
The hundred-tower'd Camelot.

It hapt
That day the king rode forth alone, and met
The damsel and her train ; she knew him not,
But staying him besought his kingly grace
To tell her if Prince Gawain yet abode
Within that city. These were all her words,
Yet her whole hist'ry trembl'd in her voice,
Flusht in the rose upon her cheek.

Then he,
The blameless king, thought in himself, " This maid
Is one our Gawain light has lightly lov'd ; "
And then to her : — " The knight of whom you ask
Is absent far upon a quest of mine ;

Not for a month will he return — but bide
You here at court that space. I am the king.”

So Marjorie abode with Guinevere,
To whom the king that night unbarr'd his thought
And added, “ When the prince returns, those twain
Shall be made one by Dubric, shall they not ? ”
And she : “ Your will is ever mine, my lord, ”
And set herself to bring the thing to pass.

Now when the month had end and he came not,
And yet another month and still he lagg'd,
Maid Marjorie, boding ill, crav'd to be free,
To go and seek him ; and the kindly king,
Doubtful, but fearing to deny the maid,
Let her go forth in charge of good Sir Bors.
Three days they rode, till on an eventide
They came to a lone castle on a crag,
Empty in seeming while the gate swung wide,
And, for they needed shelter, enter'd. Scarce
The band had clear'd the archway, ere the gate
Clang'd to behind them, and an evil host
Who made that dismal place their robbers' nest
Fell on the slender train with swarming force,
Disarm'd and bound them, though Sir Bors fought
hard.

Then Marjorie, who in woman-fear had cower'd
Till now 'within her litter, drew aside
The hangings. Mov'd by her strange beauty, yet
Still more by her sweet voice beseeching them,
The host, scarce knowing why, made pause. Then
she,

Fing'ring her lute, sang as she once had sung
To Gawain on that day when first they met.
And when the song was done, she crav'd from these
Freedom for all her train, and in exchange
Offer'd her litter and rich hangings. They,
Won by the sweetness of the song, or fill'd
With sudden madness never felt before,
Gave all she ask'd and set their captives free.

That night they lay on damp and mouldy straw
Within a lowly hovel in the wood,
And on the morrow would have gone once more
Upon their quest had not a fever seiz'd
The maid and held her fast ; and good Sir Bors,
Knowing the deadly fever of that land,
Was ware the end was near.

So past two days,
And on the third they heard the jingling reins
Of horses, and a train of knights and dames
Drew near and stay'd to rest. Sir Bors, alert,
Amongst them spying Gawain close to one

Whose name was lightly tost about the court, —
The subtle Vivien, — pluckt him by the sleeve,
Crying “ Come hence with me ! ” And Gawain went
And after them stole Vivien, and the three,
Ent’ring the hovel, came where Marjorie lay
Moaning with fever on her bed of straw.
She, feeling subtly the fine Gawain’s eyes
Upon her bent in wonder, open’d hers,
Half rais’d herself, and stretching out her arms
Toward him, gave a joyful cry, and past
Without more utterance where no soul is vext
With sighing or the myriad pains of earth.
So died the maid Prince Gawain first had lov’d.

He, when he saw the damsel dead, and heard
The voice of good Sir Bors, “ Your work, my
Prince ! ”

Had felt a pain much like remorse within,
And would have stay’d to see that all was done
Fitting the time and her, but Vivien came
And wound her arms about his neck, and said
This thing and that thing of her wiliness :
So maz’d by Vivien was light Gawain’s thought
That he departed leaving all to Bors.

Four days had end, and into Camelot
Light Gawain rode with Vivien beside,

But all the walls were hung with black, and all
The bells made music doleful from their towers.
Forth from the palace came a train of maids
Chanting a hymn, and after, on a bier
Pall'd all in samite blackness, lay the maid
Whose love had been her doom. King, queen, and
court

Pac'd slowly after, and King Arthur bent
A brow of gloom on Gawain, but said naught.
Then Gawain turn'd and follow'd the dark train
Till all was done, the while that music roll'd
Sadly above the head of Marjorie.

Then, for the man was light, he past once more
To his light loves ; and all that was, became
Erewhile to him as that which never hapt.
Such honour Gawain did to Arthur's court.



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